

SINCERE SEEKERS ASSURED FINDERS

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“If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.”
1 Chronicles 28:9

ALTHOUGH this was addressed to Solomon, it may, without any violence to the truth, be addressed tonight to every unconverted person here present, for there are a great many texts of Scripture of a similar import which apply to all ungodly ones, such, for instance, as that, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found; call you upon him while he is near.” And that other, “He that seeketh, findeth; to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”

I should like to go round, if it were possible, and say to every hearer here, as I put my hand upon his shoulder, “If you seek your God, he will be found of thee”—even of you. May I ask you to take it as spoken to each individual—not to your neighbors, not to one who is better or worse than yourselves, but to you?

You, young man, and you of riper years, you of all ages, classes and sexes, “If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.” I know that those who think at all about religion and do not understand it, are very apt to conceive that there is something wonderfully mysterious about it. That a man should follow it, and may, perhaps, attain the blessing of it towards the end of life, or on a dying bed, though some conceive that then nobody is quite sure that he is saved unless it is some extraordinarily good man.

Oh! is not this strange, that with a book so plain as this, and with a Gospel preached by so many in these days, yet the mass of mankind are in a cloud and a fog about the blessed revelation of God? Jesus Christ is salvation. He is to be had—He is to be had now. You may know you have Him. You may be saved now—completely saved, and live in the full enjoyment of that knowledge. “If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.”

The notion is that there are a great many very mysterious preliminaries, a great deal to do, and a great deal to be, and all quite beyond our power. It is not so, but seek Him. We will tell you what that means and he that seeks Him finds Him. “If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.”

It has been supposed that we should want a good deal of help in seeking after salvation. Certain persons who step in to be absolutely necessary priests between us and God. A great delusion, but there are thousands who believe it and who fancy that God won't hear them if they pray, except they have some respect for these human mediators. Away with the whole, away with any pretence for anyone to stand between the soul and God, except Jesus Christ. “If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.”

Though you bring no other man with you, but come empty-handed as you are to God here, without paraphernalia, or altar, or sacrifice of the Mass, He will be found of you. Take the text in its simplicity and sublimity. It is just this—that if any heart really seeks God in His way, it shall find Him. If any man really wants mercy from God and seeks it as God tells him to seek it, he shall have it. Any man of woman born, be he who he may, if he comes to God in the way laid down, and sincerely asks for salvation, that salvation he shall surely have.

The matter is simple enough—our pride alone obscures it. The way to heaven is so plain that “a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein.” We do but muddle it because we dislike it. We do but add this and that and the other to it because, like Naaman, the Syrian, we want to do some great thing, and we are not content to take the prophetic word, “Wash and be clean.”

I aim at nothing tonight, therefore, but that some here present may be brought to see the way of salvation and may be led to run in it. Oh! may God grant that, out of this company, there may be some at least who will be willing to seek and to find. While we shall cast the net, may the Master grant that some may be taken in it to their own eternal welfare.

We shall try to do three things, four perhaps. First, to notice *that there is a promise here explained. We will then give directions. Thirdly, we will answer objections.* And if time serves us, we will *offer a stimulant to the pursuit of this.*

First, then, there is—

I. A PROMISE TO BE EXPLAINED.

“If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.” I have almost completed my explanation already. We have lost our God by the fall—by our own sin. We have alienated ourselves from Him, but our case is not hopeless. Since Jesus Christ has come into the world and given the Gospel, and provided an atonement. It is a certainty that, if we desire the Lord and seek Him, he will be found of us.

Now He has told us the way in which to seek. It is by coming to Him as He is revealed in Christ Jesus and trusting our souls with Jesus. If we do this, we have found God—and we are saved. The sum and substance of the promise is this—any soul that, by prayer, seeks God, desires salvation through Jesus, through faith in Jesus—such a soul shall be heard, shall get the blessing it desires, shall find its God.

You shall not pray in vain. Your tears, and cries, and longings shall be heard. Christ shall be revealed to you and through your believing in Christ, you shall certainly be saved. There is not, and never will be, in hell, a single person who dare say that he sought the Lord through Christ and could not find Him. There is not living a man who dares say that, or if he did, his own conscience would belie him.

They that seek Him may not find Him at once, but they shall ultimately. Delays from God are not denials. I will repeat what I said. There is not, and there never shall be, in the pit of hell a soul that shall dare to say, “I earnestly sought mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and did not find it.” They who never found mercy in Christ never sought it, or never sought it aright and earnestly. But seeker will become a finder. Seeking in God’s way, heartily and earnestly, God will not reject him.

“How do you know who I may be?” says one—“you speak at large of all.” I do not know who you may be, but I do know this, that if “the wicked forsakes his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turns unto the LORD, he will have mercy upon him, and our God will abundantly pardon” him. I also know this, concerning you, my friend, that “whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” and be you who you may, I am bidden to preach this Gospel to every *creature* under heaven—and surely you are a *creature*.

And what is this Gospel? Why, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” Therefore, however peculiar your case or circumstances, there stands the one grand, glorious promise—“If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.” The only “if” there is, is with you. If thou seek him—no “if” about His being found of thee. Oh! shall it be an “if”? Shall it be an “if”?

The Lord convert that “if” into a certainty, and may you be constrained to say tonight, “I will seek Him, and I will never cease my seeking until in my case the promise is true, and I have found Him of whom it was written, ‘If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.’” I have thus explained the text, though it scarcely needed it.

Now let me give—

II. SOME DIRECTIONS.

What is it to seek the Lord? To seek the Lord is, in one way, simply this—the readiest way to seek Him is *to believe that Jesus is the Christ* and to trust Him—that Jesus, the Savior, is God’s anointed, and to trust Him as God’s anointed to save your soul. You shall find peace the moment you do that. “But” says one, “I want to get this faith you speak of—this trust which you explain.” Well then, let me help you somewhat.

How do we get faith in anything? Why, surely by trying to know what it is. It would be very idle for me to stand here and say to you, “Believe, believe, believe”—but not tell you what to believe—what is to be believed. A man cannot command his faith about a something that he knows nothing of. Therefore, let me say to every soul that is seeking mercy, “Acquaint yourself with God and be at peace.” “Study the Scriptures.” Try to understand God’s way of salvation. See who Christ is. What He did. What was the result of what He did. Get a clear view of His person and His work, and this will materially help you to believe.

Next to that, remember, *faith comes by hearing*. Frequent, therefore, the hearing of the Word and be careful that you seek not after the gaudy words of man’s eloquence, which may feed your pride and vanity, and tickle your ear, but can never save your soul. Seek a Christ-exalting ministry. Desire to be where your soul will be handled with fidelity and where Christ will be held up before you with simplicity and earnestness—for the hearing that God blesses is not the hearing of every man that speaks, but the hearing of the Word of God that, “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” “That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief.”

Listen with all your ears when Christ is being talked of, and pray while you are hearing, and say, “Lord, bless that message to me.” Open your soul to the message—pray the Lord to open it, that you may be like Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things which were spoken to her by Paul.

Then when you think you understand the Gospel, and have heard it so as to pretty plainly see it, if there should remain some difficulties which do not seem to be opened up to you by the ministry, *seek some earnest Christian*, to whom you may confide your soul on such points. You shall find that what is very difficult to you will be very easy to some believers and they will be able, in God’s hands, to be the means of removing the scales from your eyes. It was so with Paul when he was converted—he must go to Ananias, and when Ananias would come in, then should the scales fall from Paul’s eyes.

Meanwhile, take care *to be constantly in prayer*. Cry unto God to show you the way. Ask Him to do it, for, remember, He can do for you what you can never do for yourself. Understand that you cannot save yourself—that you have no right to be saved—that if saved, it will be by His sovereign grace—therefore, cry humbly, but oh! note the value of the blessing you need, and therefore, pray earnestly.

Do not let Him go except He blesses you. Rob yourself of sleep, sinner, rather than rob your soul of Christ. Search the Word again and again—and turn each promise into a prayer—and if you can only get a hold on the edge of a promise, go with it to the mercy seat and plead it. Be thankful for the smallest degree of hope. Trust that the first beams of day will soon expand and deepen into dawn, and into noonday.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit by going on with your old sin. Part with your old companions. Seek the house of God. Seek the people of God—*addict yourself to holy company and holy pursuits*—and although I would not put all this together in the place of my first word, which was, “Believe now—believe now in Christ,” yet if there be difficulties in the way, they will yield under such an earnest mode of seeking as I have tried to point out to you.

Oh! if a soul be resolved, “I will not perish if mercy is to be had. I will stoop to anything. I will have Christ for nothing. I will be nothing. I will let Him do what He wills with me, if I may but be saved. I will make no terms and no conditions, only let my sins be blotted out”—my friend, you are already not far from the kingdom of God. Already grace is at work in your soul and “if thou seek him, he will be found of thee.”

Continue in that blessed search. Let nothing take you off from it—it is your life—your soul hangs on it. Heaven and hell tremble in the balance for you—give your heart to God, your faith to Christ, your whole soul to the purpose of seeking your salvation, and say, “It is my only business, with holy faith and holy fear, to make my calling and election sure while here I stand upon this narrow neck of land, betwixt the two unbounded seas.”

I have thus given you some directions, but I am not going to linger over them, but pass on to—

III. ANSWER A FEW OBJECTIONS.

I cannot anticipate them all, and objection-hunting from sinners is an endless work, for when you have destroyed fifty objections, they will be ready with fifty more. But still there are a few common ones, and one is, "*I am too guilty*. Why should I seek, when it is impossible I should ever be pardoned?"

Oh! if your soul rested with a man like yourself, or even with an angel, great sinner, I would not encourage you—but who is the Savior? Think for a little. He is the mighty God. He that made the heavens and stretched them out like a tent to dwell in—He who speaks and it is done—the everlasting Father—is anything too hard for Him? Look to Him. He becomes a man and yields Himself up to death. With sufferings that can never be understood or fully described—

*"He bears that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."*

Is anything impossible for the Savior? Oh! conceive not so. The idea that any guilt is too great for Christ to pardon scarcely deserves to be replied to. It is so absurd when you are dealing with the infinite mercy of a Savior who is God Himself. It was said some years ago that the city of Peking in China suffered greatly from severe climate at one part of the year, and paid much for fuel, and yet underneath it, or close to it, there were large coal mines. And when the Chinese were asked why they did not work them, they said that they were afraid of disturbing the equilibrium of the globe—and perhaps the world might turn over and the celestial empire—which had always been at the top, might be at the bottom.

Nobody thought it worthwhile to answer so absurd a theory. And when any say, "My sins are too great for Christ to pardon," I could almost smile in the same way at a conception so ignorant. What can be too great for the Infinite Mercy of the Eternal God, who took our sins upon Himself upon the cross? Sinner, think not so.

There is another objection far more common, however, which is not put into words, but it means this—"I am too good to seek Christ. Why, have I not always been brought up religiously? I am not as those poor sinners are that have been drunkards and the like. I have not any need of seeking Him." Oh! soul, if there is one that is least likely to be saved, it is you, for they that go about to establish their own righteousness are the last to submit to the righteousness in Christ Jesus—and verily, the publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before some of you, for you can be sure of this—no man shall ever enter heaven by his own works.

There is but one gate to heaven and but one for queen or beggar, for the best order or the worst—and that is through the blood and righteousness of the one only Redeemer, and if you have not this, be you never so good, you are utterly undone. Oh! lay aside that thought. You are neither too good nor too bad, but "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee."

But I hear somebody in the corner saying, "It is no use my thinking of seeking Christ, *I am too poor*." Oh! my dear friend, your mistake, indeed, is a strange one, for did not Jesus say, "To the poor the gospel is preached"? I'll be bound to say you are not poorer than the Savior Himself for He said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay my head." Dream not this. Gold and silver have no value in His kingdom. The poorest is as wealthy as the wealthiest if He come to Christ.

"Ay, ay," says another, "but I am *too ignorant*. I scarcely can read. Unhappily for me, I was brought up where I got no learning. I can never understand these things." Friend, if you be not able to read a word in the Book, yet may you read your title clear to mansions in the skies. You need not have all this learning—it were a good thing for you if you had it—serviceable for a thousand purposes, but not needful to the entering of that kingdom.

If you know yourself as a sinner, and if you will trust Christ as a Savior, you shall be as welcome into the kingdom as doctors who have taken their degree at the Universities, or the wisest men that have

ever sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Come and welcome. Come and welcome. Come and welcome. Let not this keep you back.

But I have heard one say, “I would fain seek the Lord, but *I have no place to seek Him.*” What mean you? “I have no chamber into which I can go and pray alone.” That is a sad deprivation, I grant you, but do not think for a moment that you need any special place in which to seek the Lord. I remember a sailor who used to be much in prayer, and he was asked where he went to pray. “Oh!” said he, “I have been many a time alone with Christ up on the mast.” Why not? It is as good an oratory as a cathedral. Another man, when he was converted, used, while under conviction of sin, to make use of an old coach that was in his master’s yard. Why not? Why not? I know one whose prayer place used to be a saw pit, and another a hayloft. What matter?—

*“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”*

Every place is consecrated where there is a true heart. In that seat you may seek and find Him. Standing there, up in the corner of the gallery, your soul may find her God. In Cheapside, walking in the busiest street, or at the plowshare amidst the fields, let your soul but cry, “Jesus, pity a sinner”—let your heart trust in that Jesus—no place is wanted—any place suffices. Raise not that excuse.

“*I have not the time,*” says another. Not the time! What time, pray, does it require? But if it did require it, oh! man, are you mad to say, “I have no time”? You have time enough to dress your body—you stay for that other pin, and that other ribbon, and that adornment of your person. Not time to put on the robe of righteousness!

You have time to feed your bodies, to sit down to your meals. Not time to eat the bread of heaven! Time to cast up your accounts to see how your business stands, and not time to see to your soul’s affairs! Oh! sirs, be ashamed to make such an excuse. I charge you, give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you are saved.

A man wakes up in the night and finds his house is on fire. There is a noise in the street. The fireman is calling to him. The ladder is at the window. “I have not time,” says he, “to go down the ladder and escape. I have little enough time for rest, and I must have my sleep while I can.” The man is mad, sir, and so is every man who says, “I have not time to seek my God.”

Perhaps, however, you speak the truth, for before the next word leaves my lips you may fall down a corpse. God sometimes makes our base excuses turn into solemn truth. Oh! while you have time, use it. “Escape for your life. Look not behind you.” Stay not, but hasten till you find the Savior and never think of resting till Christ is yours.

Another reason that some bring is one which occurs to them as if it were very satisfactory, and that is, “*I cannot.*” No man can come, except he is drawn, and I cannot.” Yes, but you may put a truth into such a shape that it is a lie. Will you let me put that into the right shape? Every time when a sinner cannot, the real reason is that he will not. All the cannots in the Bible about spiritual inability are tantamount to will nots.

But when you say, “I cannot repent,” you mean, “I will not—I will not seek, I will not believe.” Now put it honestly to your own soul, for that is what you mean, for if you would, you could. If the will were conquered, the power would be sure to come with it, but the first difficulty is, “You will not”—and this is it, you will not seek eternal life. You will not escape from hell. You will not have heaven. You will not be reconciled to God—you will not come to Christ that you might have Christ. You make it as an objection, but I charge it upon you as crime—a crime which aggravates all the rest, and is in itself greater crime, perhaps, than all the rest put together. You will not come.

“Do you want to come?” “Yes, but there is much I cannot do.” “Aye! but there is means provided to help you.” God the Holy Spirit helps you, yes, works mightily in you. Have you never heard of that

Negro servant who was sent by his master on an errand? He did not particularly like to go there. He was sent with a letter.

He was back in a short time and his master said, Sam, you have not gone with that letter.” “No, Massa.” “Why not?” “Massa couldn’t expect Sam to do impossibilities.” “What impossibilities, sir?” “I went on as far as I could, Massa—came to river—couldn’t swim across river—very wide river—couldn’t swim across it.” “But there is a ferry-boat.” “Ferry-boat on t’other side, Massa—ferry-boat t’other side.”

“Did you call to the ferry-boat, sir?” “No, Massa; didn’t.” “Oh! you rascal,” said he, “that is no excuse at all. Why didn’t you call for the ferry-boat? Why didn’t you call for it?” Now if that Negro had only just said, “Boat, ahoy there!” the ferry-boat would have come to him and all would have been well. It was an idle thing to say, “I cannot.” It was true, but it was false.

So when I come to a point where there is something in the matter of my being saved which I cannot do, yet if I pray the Holy Spirit to work in me that which I cannot work in myself, He will do it. Jesus Christ will give me “true belief and true repentance—every grace that brings me nigh.” I have only to ask for all that I want and I shall have it. It is idle for me to say, “I cannot do it.” Nobody asked you to. Christ will give it to you. Only stand and call—call mightily, and cry with all your soul until the blessing comes.

But now I must close. I want to offer just a few sentences only.

IV. A STIMULANT, to lead you to seek Him who will be found of you. And the first is, “*Is it not our duty to God that we should seek Him?*” With some persons this reflection may be important. You remember the Countess of Huntingdon, one of the most remarkably gracious women that ever lived—a mother in Israel.

Her conversion was to a great degree caused by this—she was a happy and worldly lady of noble rank, excellent and amiable, and all that, but she had no thought of the things of God. She was at a ball and the amusements of the evening were engrossing all attention, and suddenly the answer to the first question of the assembly’s catechism, which she appears to have learnt when she was a child, came forcibly into her mind, “The chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever.”

She thought to herself, “Why, here am I, a butterfly among a lot of butterflies. All our chief end is to enjoy ourselves, to spend the evening merrily making ourselves agreeable, and so on.” She went away smitten in her soul with that thought, “The end that God made me for I am not answering.”

Now there are some minds that have sufficient in them to think of such a thing as that, and I shall leave that to fall into some honest and good ground. Perhaps some young man will say, “Well, after all, I am not serving my Creator as I should.” You remember the conversion of Colonel Gardiner? He had lived a wild soldier’s life and he had appointed that very night of his conversion to perpetuate a gross sin.

He was waiting an hour before he went to his appointment, and he thought he saw, I think upon the wall, the Savior on the cross, and underneath the representation of the Crucified, he read these words—

“I have done this for thee; what hast thou done for me?”

He never kept that sinful appointment. He became a soldier of the cross. Oh! I wish that some here might feel something of nobility within them that would make them feel, “It is mean to act so unjustly to God, as to prefer the trivial things of time to the weighty matters of eternity.”

The next stimulus I would offer is one of *hope*. “If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.” “Oh!” says one, “if I could find Him, I would seek Him.” When persons go to South Africa, they search for diamonds, but if any man could be assured that he would find a Koh-i-noor, I warrant you he would be one of the hardest workers there.

Oh! there are some here tonight that little dream it, that they will yet before long be telling to others what eternal love has done for them. They are very ready to sneer at it, perhaps, at this moment. They

think it is impossible. The Lord does great marvels. He brings down the mighty from their seat, and exalts them of low degree.

Oh! soul, the gate may not open at the first knock to you, it may be, but it will open. Let me encourage you. You shall yet rejoice. Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty, for there is a harp in heaven that no finger shall ever play on but yours, and there is a crown there that will fit no head but yours, and a throne on which no one must sit but you. The Lord has chosen you, and therefore, this night He calls you. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” Go you, poor soul, to Christ, and you shall find it so.

But if that does not move you, let me give you another stimulant, and that is the opposite one, of *fear*. Suppose you should never seek your Lord? Suppose you should die without a Savior—what then? “I shall die,” say you, “my soul will go before God.” What then? Why, it must be condemned, and by and by your body shall rise up—from the grave shall your body spring, and you in body and soul shall stand before the bar of that great Savior whom you tonight despise.

Beware, for the books will be opened and your rejection of Christ written there shall be read before the assembled world. And then when the earth does rock and reel and the ungodly in their terrors ask for the mountains to cover them—when the stars fall like withered figs from the trees and all creation gathers up her skirts to flee away from the face of Him who comes in terror, oh! what will you do? What will you do?

Expire, you cannot. Be extinguished, you will not—live on, you must. And in anguish that shall never abate, in despair that never shall be enlightened with a hope. “Turn ye, turn ye! Why will ye die?” Why will you reject Him? “If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.” Oh! do seek Him. Reject Him not. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

Oh! who shall give me tears? Who shall teach me to speak with pathos? How shall I reach your consciences and stir your hearts? Eternal Spirit, do You this mighty work, and win this night to Yourself. O Jesu, save many a heart by this testimony of the grace, which again and again we reiterate, “If we seek Him—if you seek Him—he will be found of thee.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 3:13-36

Verse 13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven.*

We are in the stairway, now, between heaven and earth. Christ has come down. Christ has gone up, and yet He was always there—a mystery, but one that is true, and now, today we can go up by thought and prayer, and blessings can come down, and Christ is always there. “He is at the Father’s side, the Man of Love, the Crucified.”

14-15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

What a glorious word! Here is the Gospel in a verse, the whole Bible in a line or two. If we believe in Him this morning, we have eternal life—not merely life, but life similar to the very life of God Himself—eternal life. We have in us that which will outlast the world, the sun, the moon, and the stars. We have a life which, being like the life of God, we shall live forever and ever.

16-17. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

Condemnation does come to the world through Christ, because the world rejects Him, but that was no part of God’s design in sending Him. His design is salvation—salvation only. Oh! that we might so believe as to answer to the divine purpose in the sending of His Son.

“He that believeth on him is not condemned,” not even now, notwithstanding every sin he has committed, he is not condemned. “But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Unbelieving is the condemning sin—it seals upon us the condemnation of every other sin. If you do not believe in Christ this morning, my hearer, you are not in a state of probation, you are condemned already. He that believes on Him is not in a state of probation, he is not condemned. He is already acquitted, he is at this moment free from condemnation before the judgment seat of God.

19-21. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

You see why men do not come to Christ—they do not want to give up their sin—they do not want to be made uneasy in it. They are afraid of being reproved. You see why saintly men come to Christ, for they take a delight in beholding Him, and in having their faith and their grace made manifest, both to themselves and to onlookers.

22-24. *After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.*

So he was busy until he was cast into prison. He would not waste an hour while he had an opportunity of doing good. He did it with all his heart. John! are you here in this sanctuary at this moment, not yet laid up, not yet obliged to keep your bed? Work while you can then—spend every moment in your Master’s service.

25. *Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying.*

Is it not a come-down—from reading about looking to Christ and loving, to a contention about purifying? There always are in the church more or less idle quarrels about the dress of the preacher, about the mode of administering sacraments, and so on—a discussion about purifying.

26. *And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.*

“They are leaving you.” They felt an envy on behalf of John because his influence appeared to be declining. John was quite a stranger to this feeling. He loved to see his Master grow, even at the cost of his own effacing.

27. *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.*

No spiritual power, no power to bless his fellow men, except it come from God. Shall I quarrel with God, therefore, if He gives to this man more power than He gives to me? Shall I dispute about it? It is God’s sovereign will and He does as He pleases.

28-29. *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

They were vexed, but John was joyful. He loved to hear of Jesus prospering.

30. *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

So he did. This is John’s one song, last of his utterances almost. He preaches no more sermons that are recorded. He must now go to prison, and there lie in a silence which he could scarcely bear. It was very hard for John to be quiet. He had an active, noble mind, and he became the victim, we fear, of doubts when he was shut up in prison. The breezy air of the wilderness suited him much better than the dull, heavy atmosphere of a prison.

I daresay some of you may feel this at this time—do not set it down to spiritual results, to spiritual causes—set it down to the atmosphere, for so it is. We often feel dull and heavy, but heaviest when the heart is in a heavy air. Every wind that rises blows away despair. So we must not think too much of our feelings, which even the wind can change.

31. *He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.*

However good a man may be, he is earthly—there is flesh and blood about him akin to the earth—and even if he handles heavenly things, the earthiness of the preacher peeps out every now and then. Christ had nothing of that about Him—He was above all.

32. *And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.*

Sad note! The news that all men went to Christ pleased John, but the fact that none received His testimony, comparatively none, grieved his heart.

33-34. *He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*

There is an infinite spiritual power about the words of Christ—they are the words of God, and the Holy Spirit concentrates all His energy in those words.

35-36. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

So John's last words are thunder. His dying speech has in it the word most terrible to all of you who believe not in Christ, "The wrath of God abideth on him."

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.